

Key points

- Depression is a complex condition with many different and overlapping elements
- Older patients with depression present to their general practitioners, who have limited time for the difficult task of diagnosis
- Lack of resources and local expertise mean that the majority of patients in primary care will be treated with antidepressant drugs
- SSRIs are the antidepressants of choice in older patients

Dr Alan Wade explains how general practitioners can increase their knowledge of all aspects of depression to improve the outlook for their elderly patients

The many faces of

depression

A recent report published by the Royal Society of Medicine (RSM) Press, *The Many Faces of Depression*, has highlighted that depression is a complex condition consisting of many different and overlapping elements.

A job for the GP

Around 15 per cent of elderly people are known to suffer from depressive illness of sufficient severity to make intervention appropriate. Elderly people with